

STUDENT UNREST- CAUSES AND CURE

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Abstract: - All the word over, the youth form a significant class of the society because they have an important role to play. Every nation regards its youth as its backbone as all young men and women are hopes of the future. But now wide spread frustration has been found in the youths of society which is decreasing their work efficiency. They are showing their discontentment by behaving against social norms in a manner which bewilder the alders. The problem is national as well as international. In order to have a comprehensive and correct assessment of the present day condition of the youth, It is essential to examine each of these factors in an objective manner.

The student world of India today is in a profound state of unrest and disquiet. Time and again instances of student indiscipline leading to disturbances and dislocation have manifested themselves in almost all parts of the country. This phenomenon has assumed such looming dimensions that it has become an alarmingly serious problem requiring our immediate attention. Student indiscipline is not merely an exhibition of youthful exuberance nor can it be explained away as the work of interested outsiders- political or otherwise who are trying to fish in the troubled waters of student unrest.

It generally happens that every year, as the session advances and examination come nearer, undesirable activities among students gradually peter out. But it would be wrong to bank upon this seasonal cure. Since what, because of the fear of the examination, has receded in the dormant regions of the mind comes to the fore, reasserts itself and at the beginning of the next academic term flares up. What does it all signify? Is it a deficiency of discipline or does it indicate increasing political awakening and consciousness in the student community? Are they just exhibiting ostentatiously or is it a boredom forcing them to find some unconventional outlet? Is it an indication of exuberant health or is it a symptom of some destructive or ruinous disease?

The phenomenon of student unrest and discipline, doubtlessly, has assumed alarming proportions and has become a matter of serious pondering and thought for educationists, administrators, parents and the Society at large. Indeed, people everywhere are concerned today with the restive youth - the uprisings, the protests, the violence, the lack of student restraint in our colleges and Universities, throughout the land. Unrest among the students has become a matter of national concern, with speeches of exhortations published side by side with reports of new incidents. Seemingly, it appears as if the handling of the disturbances by brute force aggravate situation in the

country, but on analyzing the happenings deeply, it is found that the problem is not as simple as most of the people think. The demoralization of Indian students may be clearly traced to the state of the colleges and universities, absence of sufficient and proper facilities, insufficient and inaccessible professors, inept and stiff-necked or bureaucratic administrators, lack of facilities for co-curricular activities and increasingly limited prospects for jobs after graduation say even after getting the highest possible degree. This is the result of the rapid and largely uncontrolled expansion of university education since independence. Every year the number of universities, colleges and students is increasing but it does not commensurate either with the opportunities for jobs or with the facilities for mental and physical development of the students. There are students who have never talked to their professors, no wonder there are professors also who have not known many of their students despite having taught them for years together. Further, most of the students in India come from the poorer families which cannot actually afford for the education of their children but which send them in the vain hope of building their future careers as well as improving the financial condition of the families when they are suitably employed after completing their education. But with the academic standards declining and competition growing the University degree is losing its value as a passport to a better life. The bitter consequence is wide spread frustration among the students. In fact, the whole texture of our society is blended with heterogeneous elements always thinking of having their own axe to grind. We have homes and schools without discipline, parents and teachers without authority, education without commonsense and examination marks without justice. We have books without delicacy, men without honesty, politics without integrity and politicians without honour. All this reflects on the personality of the youth who work more under impulse than under cold or sober judgement.

All these things have raised several vital issues. Are strikes due to expression of a conflict of generation of youth losing faith in the old? Or are they because of the ever yawning generation gap? Or are they just symptomatic of the times, the age of unrest and tension we live in? Or are they manifestations, at one more level of some sense of general frustration within the country? Or are the conditions in our universities really so poor or have suddenly deteriorated that our young men are genuinely agitated about them? Or have the academic and administrative standards so woefully gone down in our seats of learning that the student community feels encouraged to resort to frequent acts of indiscipline? or do these point to some fundamental defects in our educational system? or again could it be that our students acting under aspiration from examples in other parts of the world ?

These and a host of other questions arise and call for a systematic, critical and thorough investigation as the root of the disease cannot be cured by treating the superficial symptoms or suppressed by the show of might. Therefore, some immediate remedy has to be found out for focussing the attention of all concerned only on the grievances and their remedies, rather than on the violence and its inevitable sequel of destruction. Everyone is keenly desirous of the good of students and puts a high premium on their welfare.

Students and everyone interested in them have to pause and decide here and now not to indulge in violent thinking and violent action and destruction either of property or of life. There are, unfortunately for us, certain such political elements as believe in violent methods and try to exploit all kinds of dissatisfactions whether they be of students or peasants or workers. Students have to be

aware of these influences. Everyone interested not only in the welfare and progress of students but also of humanity itself must help students adopt the mood and means of the real democratic approach which is sans violence that vitiates every human relationship. The students blame the teachers, the teachers blame the students and the educational authorities, they in turn, blame the system of education, the politicians and they in their turn blame the police. The police say and rightly too that they have no other means but the 'lathi' and the tear gas and sometimes the gun when law and order are in jeopa dy. The resultant atmosphere is the least congenial to a calm and quiet probe into the grievances and their removal, though that is the aim of all agitation.

The student rebellion may be, indisputably for some, a distinctive phase of the general global unrest and frustration which has led to the cult of 'angry youngman' of today, but it should not make us minimise the gravity of the situation and the desirability of grappling with the problem in a consistent and planned manner at all levels of our educational system. National leaders, world statesmen, armed chair academicians, shrewed administrators, business magnates, rotarians, philianthropists, industrialists, parents, teachers, philosophers and top-notchers, in almost all walks of life, are fully seized with the grave problem and want the issue to be studied seriously and scientifically with the ovid intention of tapping the genuine root causes of this malaise and thereby finding the practical remedies which could be incorporated in our educational life, thereby making it richer, more realistic, purposeful and productive. Hence to take cognizance of some of those factors which contribute to student unrest in our country, the following, after a thorough survey and study are found to be highly inflammable:

For Student unrest Students alone are not responsible:

Today the Indian students are the most responsive to society which because of its multiplicity of activities between the various changing values of life, the mad race for power, the shifting loyalties, the lack of social and moral responsibilities and selfish opportunism among the leaders have directly influenced the student community. And it is a bitter fact, rather a stark reality that all that the students are doing is simply that they are carrying these trends to the violent extremes. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that unrest among the students flows from the outside.

To make the present day student feel his responsibility towards the society, of which he is an integral part, he, as far as possible, should be associated with the administrative routine so that his developing ego is satisfied to some extent at least and he uses more of intellect than let himself be swayed by the sentimental slogans of self-styled leaders.

Commercialization of education:-

Commercialization of education has brought into being new evils. Admission in noted institutions can be secured either on payment or by influence of the parents. These two factors invariably give rise to discrimination. Discrimination which is not based on reasonable grounds leads to discontent and jealousy. Merited and deserving young men born in poor families find it difficult to prosecute their aptitudes. Their financial and social disability affects their self-respect and subjects them to defeatism,

if not overcome in time, gives birth to frustration of the worst kind. Such frustration contains germs of revolt against established order in society.

Faulty Administration of the Institution:

Students are the worst victims of the bureaucratic set of administrative machinery and the autocratic ways of its head. They live in an atmosphere of indifference and negligence. Indifference breeds anger and it becomes the habit of the neglected persons to behave irresponsibly on account of their anger. The dissatisfaction generally goes on increasing among the students and when it assumes a dangerous dimension then the administration gets worried about it. Indeed, when the student is given a rough deal at any level, his ego is hurt and he harbours the wounds of mis-treatment with the desire to recall on the administration as and when the time is ripe for it. Thus unsympathetic, inconsiderate and rough handling of the student, at any level, sows in him somewhere deep the seeds of revolt.

It is a fact that if in dealing with students this one factor is kept in view, many of the ills, which lead the students to frustration and later on to violence, can be avoided. Psychologists have, time and again emphasised the fact that the student should be treated as a living entity pulsating with life and not as automation. New situations demand new techniques to handle the raw youth lest they should go astray and become pawns in the hands of unscrupulous politicians. Discipline is good but it must be evoked spontaneously rather than maintained by force. Love is the key that can unlock the door of enduring and self-sustaining student discipline.

Favouritism In internal Assessment:

Internal assessment has often, if not always, resulted in agitating the minds of those who are adversely affected by it. No doubt, the introduction of internal assessment, for the periodic assessment of the student's work, is good in itself but it is really sad to see that it has become a tool, in the hands of the teachers, for exploiting the students. As a result those who can win the favour of their teachers almost always top the list of successful candidates whether they deserve it or not. Quite surprising facts have been revealed in this direction and it has been found that students hardly getting pass marks or still shocking zero in external get ninety to ninety-five per cent in internal. Such a state of affairs certainly agitates those who are adversely affected by it. Their scholastic attainments, intellectual grasp and clear understanding bring them no credit if they are, unfortunately, at cross with their teacher. Under the circumstances, unrest is the usual outcome and before this exploitation of the students assumes alarmingly serious turn, it must be nipped in the bud. Teachers should have an impartial attitude towards their students and should show no prejudices in matters of assessment, of course credit should be given to those students who have done outstanding work in various curricular and co-curricular activities but in no way, they should use it as a tool for gaining their personal ends.

Strained Relations Between the Teacher and the Taught :

Everybody is aware of the fact that today there is no personal contact between a student and his teachers whose utility to him is marginal. There is a staggering percentage often between eighty

and ninety of those who, throughout their stay, have not spoken to their teachers except at the time of the roll call. Very often students do not know even the names of the teachers because a teacher is known, among them, by some other name which serves them as well as their purpose. And the teacher, of course, does not and cannot know his students by name except a few either bright or dashing ones. Thus the bond of affection and reverence that once tied the two together is missing from our present day educational institution and it is not surprising, if under the circumstances the students, at the slightest provocation, take to indisciplined activities.

To thwart all this, we shall have to see that healthy relations between students and teachers should be developed. The teachers should come out of their academic ivory towers to be one with the students who would have genuine affection and real respect for them. Thus their easy access to their teachers will enable them to solve their day-to-day problems before they reach the saturation points. Teaching should no longer be one way traffic but should be a joint enterprise of the both. This will not only help in making teaching-learning effective but will also lead to the reduction of tension and frustration among the students.

Lack of Faith in Future:

‘Where there is no Vision, the people perish’ is an old saying and in it may be found the very seeds of present student unrest. Youth of our country are lacking in having a goal in life and unless education endows the youth with a sense of mission it is an utter failure. A spirit of cynicism has swept over the student world and our young men and women have no faith in the future. They are all marching ahead but whither to knows none. They are, in fact, groping in the dark. They are looking ‘before and after’ and pining for ‘what is not’. They are like a rudderless boat. There is nothing which is worthy of reverence in their eyes. They are ignorant of the country’s traditions because the atmosphere that prevails in the seats of learning makes them alien to their own cultural heritage. It is not providing them any set of values which will equip them with art to stand on their feet in difficult times. Breakdown of traditional values and restraints of family and community life have created a pathless jungle in which the young are lost and bewildered. A young man is always thought of as energetic and aggressive and willing to do even difficult things if called for. But standing at the cross-roads of life, the Indian student is torn as under between the dead past and the unborn future since his vision about the future shape of things to come is not crystal clear, he is restless and keen to discover the unknown for himself. Under the circumstances, a teacher is the best model for a student to emulate. An ideal teacher, dedicated to his profession, sympathising with his students in his hour of need, can serve a beacon light for the faltering and Jumbling youth of our times.

Uncongenial Social Environment:

Student unrest cannot be treated in isolation from the general attitudes that pervade our society today, where a yawning gap between precept and action has caused invariably a great disillusionment to the growing youth. The social, economic and political situation is aheading towards dead end. The problems of inflation, unemployment, corruption, exploitation etc. affect the students directly as they affect the other sections of the society. The student, who is sitting in the class-room, often does not have his mind in his studies but is thinking of his own domestic problems. He, being young and full of

energy, obviously feels agitated when he does not find the things coming upto his expectations and nothing shocking if at this stage he becomes violent. Moreover, it has become a tradition that the authorities listen only after a person agitates and now when the students have taken the lead nothing surprising. After all they form the enlightened section of the society and if they rebel they are justified in their own way.

The problem, can, however, be solved only when we free the present society of its prevalent ills and create such an alluring atmosphere as the youth may feel proud of being its integral part. This will inspire the students to have faith in the present social, economic and political set up. In this context we, certainly, cannot minimise the place of parents and teachers who are to be the embodiments of those virtues and ideals which they want their young ones to accept and adopt. They must give the growing youth a faith that is vital, transforming, that gives direction to life, dedication to work and makes life worth- living.

Joint Family System to Single Family System:-

The gradual disruption of joint family system and weakening of elderly control have produced certain significant consequences. No doubt, the joint family system has certain evils of its own, like the sense of dependence, Loss of initiative and blind by affection of the elders in the family. At one time, it bound all members in the family together by affection and security of life. To a certain extent, life in a joint family required qualities of adjustment; subordination of one's needs to the general welfare of the family and will to work of the common good. The loss of elderly control has left the young people free to find out their own solutions for their problems.

More importance to Rights than duties: -

Independence of a country from political slavery is a stepping stone for economic progress to achieve freedom from poverty and hunger. The Constitution of our country guarantees freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and of movement, freedom of property and of person. These guarantees should have conduced to a life of self- confidence, of hard work and self-respect. Selfishness and absence of sense of responsibility make freedom a mockery. Freedom and license have become indistinguishable. The youngster as well as the elders have developed greater consciousness for right than for duties. They forget that every right entails fulfillment of a corresponding duties. All rights spring from duties fulfilled. The youngster today hardly think of duties. They talk of rights and want them without working for them. Absolute freedom is impossible in any society. Personal freedom has to be limited in order that others may enjoy their own freedom.

Change in Political and Public Life:-

With the ushering in of freedom in the country the inspiring vision of patriotic leaders devoted to life of sacrifice and selflessness gradually disappeared.

The cult of personal power led to corruption at different levels. People who were not worthy of any position or office became prominent in public life and amassed vast fortunes. Men without means and without ideals suddenly rose to position of fortune and power.

The normal effect of such trend in public life cannot but be disastrous. The people who got into power or acquired fortune evoked jealousy, with the result that there were rivalries in the political parties and mutual recrimination amongst the leaders. Merit and integrity became casualties. Such a state of affairs naturally brought about false sense of values in everyday life.

Such changes in the public and political life of the country has disastrous effect on the minds of young students who are by nature impressionable. They began to think that their idealism and honesty brought only suffering and no wealth or happiness. They began to feel frustrated. Today the interests of personal advancement dominate the life and thinking of the youngsters. These trends in public life have deteriorated our standards of integrity. Most of the youngsters have become self-indulgent; they are critical of others but seldom critical of themselves.

Selfish interests of Politicians:-

Glamour of political life has become too attractive. What is more, political leaders are not leaving the students to pursue their studies and acquire knowledge. They have begun to use them for their purpose, for agitation and for disturbing the men in power.

Most of the political organizations in the country have created youth wings. The members of these youth wings are generally students who failed in their examinations and yet hanker after some sort of power and easy publicity. They have lost earnestness in life. Every one desires to achieve name or notoriety by hook or crook.

This will result in a great set-back to pursuit of scholarship and learning. No country can thrive unless it is able to produce young men and women whose interests in life centre round acquisition of knowledge with object of using it for the advancement of the country.

Lack of Incentives for Studies:

The atmosphere in our educational institutions is highly discouraging. Today there appears to be utter muddle in the field of education and a lot of politics and laxity has entered into it. Our educational institutions have become asylums of party propaganda, rowdyism and cheap politics instead of becoming temples of learning and seats of spiritual enrichment. They no more attract the young students with the same reverence and passion for knowledge with which the students, in olden days, were attracted. Regarding the quality of the teaching staff, it may be sad that most of the teachers are not at all worthy of this noble profession. They join this calling partly because they have failed to find access to other suitable profession and partly because they feel that the life in it is quite easy going. They have neither the worth nor passion for teaching as such their teaching is mostly stereotyped and hackneyed which leads the students nowhere. The students too do not bother about teaching because they know that degrees and positions are not earned, these days, by hard labour but they are obtained by serving unfair interests of those in position. As such the students living under

such an unhealthy atmosphere, prevalent in our educational institutions, are bound to grow discontented and disrespectful towards their teachers and authorities. Since they have no respect for them, they easily ignore their advice and take law into their own hands on the slightest grievances against them. Hence, unless the teachers are of good quality and character, unless they are being properly respected and duly consulted by the educational authorities and administrators, while framing educational plans and policies, and unless political parties leave the educational institutions and unless the educational institutions provide proper incentives for studies the students will not learn to respect their teachers, seek their advice and mend their behaviour towards them as well as towards the society as a whole.

Thus if we want to have an effective intellectual community in India that is dedicated to an effective programme of academic renewal, we must eradicate those ills from our educational system which have caused a rupture between the teacher and the taught. The students must be made to give up their agitational approach and they should raise themselves in the fields of academics, morality, social consciousness, national integration and international co-operation. The teachers and the educational administrators must give up their high-handedness towards students and instead of playing the role of an intellectual snob; they must assume the role of well wisher and sympathiser of the students. If the two parties i.e. student on one side and the authorities on the other meet on the common platform of mutual understanding, there can be useful acquisition of learning in an academic milieu which will cry halt to student disturbances. Then a lot of wastage can be conveniently avoided and education can be progressively made more and more purposeful, profitable and fruitful and its recipient's virtuous citizens upon whose shoulders rest the future survival of their nation. If the mind of the youth is occupied usefully and idealistically, there can be no doubt that the present state of restlessness would yield place to harmony of thought and action for the betterment of oneself and of the community at large.

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